

ABSTRACT

A system and method for verifying a printed document. Generally, the system is implemented to automatically compare first and second images and provide an output with respect thereto. In an illustrative embodiment, the inventive system includes a computer for providing a first electronic image of a document. The image may be provided via a network such as the Internet. A printer is coupled to the computer and driven to print the document. The document is then scanned to provide a second electronic image of the document. The scanned image is then compared to the original image to provide verification of the printed output. For text based documents, the first and second images may be converted to text using conventional optical character recognition software to facilitate comparison. In a refinement of the present teachings, a mechanism is provided to detect a file characterization by which a restriction may be imposed on the number of the documents to be printed. If a document is restricted, successful printouts above the restriction are disabled. As a further refinement, a second mechanism is included to enable a fingerprint to be printed on the restricted document. When scanned, the fingerprint provides an indication of the operability of the printer and the scanner. In the event the fingerprint is not detected, the printer is disabled. This mechanism would be useful in a pay-to-print application to frustrate fraudulent efforts to disable the scanner and thereby cause the printer to output unauthorized printouts.